FELLOW NEWS

News for and about the Coastal Management Fellows

Issue Twenty-one April 2004

FOCUS ON FELLOWS: SUSAN FOX 2002–2004

Fellow Susan Fox snowboarding recently in Vermont.

The Savannah River Site's main facility is located near Aiken, South Carolina where, economically speaking, it supports the town. The facility was constructed in the early 1950s to produce tritium, plutonium-239, and other materials used to make nuclear weapons for U.S. defense programs.

The close proximity of a nuclear facility to her hometown doesn't color fellow Susan Fox's recounting of it. She describes Aiken as "beautiful, gorgeous, a great town to grow up in." The youngest of four children, Susan comes from a tight-knit family and spent much of her childhood outdoors "climbing magnolia trees and building forts in the woods."

In high school Susan developed an interest in teaching and gave it a whirl by participating in the state's Teacher Cadet program. She guest lectured for her former 7th grade science teacher, Mrs. Manos, and really enjoyed interacting with students. She went on to study biology in undergraduate school with thoughts of becoming a biology professor in academia.

Moving to Charleston to attend the College of Charleston was a big move for Susan, who had never lived anywhere other than Aiken. Before graduating with her bachelor's in biology, Susan secured a summer internship at NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science laboratory at Fort Johnson.

There, she conducted biotoxin and cellular research and began to build her technical laboratory skills. Knowing that her internship would end in a few months, she applied for and accepted a seasonal teaching position for the Marine Science Consortium (MSC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting teaching and research in the marine sciences.

This second big move landed Susan at the MSC's main campus in Wallops Island, Virginia, where she lived in the staff residence hall, which she describes as an "old naval barracks." For four months she taught a three-day coastal ecology program to countless groups of middle and high school students. This "intense experience" was one that Susan "enjoyed and learned a lot from."

After the fall term, friends and family drew Susan back to Charleston, but professionally she "wasn't sure what she wanted to do." While working in retail, she took various courses and discovered that she "was really interested in genetics and wanted to get back into science."

Two subsequent jobs in Charleston allowed Susan to build upon her previous technical laboratory skills and expand her knowledge of genetics. Trees were at the heart of Susan's tissue, cell culture, and genetic research at Westvaco, a local paper mill, while at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's vegetable lab, Susan researched the genetics of watermelon disease resistance. This job brought her

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increased responsibility but Susan says, “I couldn’t publish my findings with a bachelor’s degree.” This provided the impetus she needed to consider returning to graduate school.

A previous supervisor put Susan in touch with a professor who conducted conservation genetics research at the College of Charleston. After meeting with him to discuss the graduate program, she decided to enroll. The program, which culminates with a Master of Environmental Science (MES), engaged Susan in land use issues and opened her eyes to how policy affects the environment.

As graduation approached, Susan learned of the Coastal Management Fellowship through the MES program and says, “A fellow classmate really encouraged me to apply.” Originally interested in other projects, Susan first began considering Connecticut’s project at the matching workshop. After listening to the state’s presentation, she found that the conservation and coordination efforts involved in the project really appealed to her.

In her biggest move to date, Susan relocated to Hartford, Connecticut, to work with the Office of Long Island Sound Programs (OLISP) of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection on a fellowship project entitled "Public Access to Coastal Environments (PACE)."

Improving and increasing public access to the Connecticut shoreline has been a high priority of OLISP. According to shoreline ownership statistics,

A page from the coastal access Web site, now in its final stages of review.

20 percent of the shoreline in Connecticut is publicly owned, and about half of that is owned by municipalities.

The goal of the PACE project is to collect, organize, analyze, and share public access information. The four components of PACE that help it work toward this goal are a coastal access Web site, coastal recreation needs assessment surveys, a coastal land assessment tool, and Connecticut’s Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) plan.

Susan has been involved in each of the four components to varying degrees. One of her main efforts has been updating information in the existing coastal access geographic information system (GIS) and Microsoft Access® database, which includes over 300 public access sites with site-specific information such as directions, activities, habitat, and popular uses.

To fill in information gaps, Susan “talked to several municipalities and also traveled to many public access spots to take photographs.” She also refined the existing database by adding tables and custom-designed forms to allow easy and accurate entry.

Next, Susan incorporated the database information into the design of the coastal access Web site. She conducted research on Web site usability and worked with a project group to develop content and layout. As a result, users can search by any number of criteria related to a particular public access site including name, town, or recreation activity. In the final stages of review, the Web site is designed to be a comprehensive and dynamic source of public access site information.

In addition to coordinating the Web site design project, Susan consulted with government agencies and universities to develop and disseminate three coastal recreation needs assessment surveys, which will help OLISP identify and prioritize coastal land acquisition opportunities

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and improve existing coastal recreation facilities. The surveys have been available for two months and Susan says, "So far, I'm really pleased with response to them."

Development of the coastal land assessment tool and Connecticut's CELCP plan will continue after Susan's fellowship ends. The tool will map existing shoreline ownership in Connecticut to identify the remaining unprotected coastal areas with high coastal recreation value.

In preparing Connecticut's CELCP plan, Susan reviewed other state land protection strategies and contacted interested state, local, and nonprofit entities for help on identifying key coastal conservation needs.

Susan has also gained experience in other coastal management activities for which OLISP is responsible, such as coastal site plan reviews, coastal permitting, and habitat restoration. She is excited by the progress of the PACE project and hopes that it improves understanding of existing shoreline ownership and increases the public's use of coastal access information.

Susan's next move is likely to be back to South Carolina where she would like to continue her work in the coastal management field—just closer to friends and family. She admits that after shivering through two Connecticut winters, warmer weather is also calling her back to the Palmetto State. ♦

For more information about Connecticut's PACE project, e-mail Susan at *susan.fox@po.state.ct.us*

FOCUS ON THE FELLOWSHIP: SEA GRANT ENDORSEMENTS

Twenty-two Sea Grant programs endorsed 37 applicants, a record high, to the Coastal Services Center for the 2004 to 2006 Coastal Management Fellowship program. Applications were reviewed by an eight-member selection panel who selected the semifinalists in March.

These semifinalists will travel to Charleston, South Carolina, in April to attend a matching workshop. Finalists placed with coastal zone management host agencies will work on issues ranging from rocky shore resource management to aquatic invaders. ♦

For more information about the Coastal Management Fellowship, visit the website at *http://www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/fellows.html*

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*Training classes are limited to project partners and NOAA line offices.

April 2004
1: Public Issues and Conflict Management (PICM) – Ithaca, New York
14–15: Remote Sensing for Spatial Analysts – Charleston, South Carolina
19–22: Public Issues and Conflict Management (PICM) – Pensacola, Florida
29–30: Visitor Use Management – Waquoit, Massachusetts

June 2004
21–22: Introduction to ArcGIS 8.3 – Charleston, South Carolina
23–25: Coastal Applications Using ArcGIS 8.3 – Charleston, South Carolina

For more information, point your browser to *www.csc.noaa.gov/training/*.

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FOCUS ON THE CENTER: ASSISTANTSHIP PROGRAMS

Participants at the recent orientation training for the Pacific Islands and Coral Management Assistantship programs in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Pacific Islands Assistantship

Participating in the Coastal Management Fellowship has always been open to coastal programs of the Pacific Islands, but the remote location of this region often limits participation.

To meet this challenge, in 2001 the Coastal Services Center developed the Pacific Islands Assistantship, which serves American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and Hawaii. The program is very similar to the fellowship program, with assistants working on special projects identified by each host jurisdiction.

Coral Management Assistantship

NOAA recently launched a new island-based program to meet the need for additional capacity building in the Pacific and Caribbean U.S. flag agencies responsible for managing coral reefs.

Assistants are placed with host jurisdictions for two years to support local coral management projects. The inaugural group is working on such issues as recreational overuse, education and outreach needs, and land-based pollution concerns.

Orientation Training

In January, orientation training for both assistantship programs was held concurrently at the Pacific Services Center in Honolulu, Hawaii. All nine assistants, with their mentors and managers, participated in the training, as well as staff from several NOAA offices.

The training was well received and participants most benefited from the opportunity to meet with each other to discuss the assistantship projects. ♦

For more Information

For more information about the Pacific Islands Assistantship, visit the Web site at *www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/fellows/pacific-island.html*, or contact *Darcee.Killpack@noaa.gov*.

For more information about the Coral Management Assistantship, visit the Web site at *www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/assistants/*, or contact *Carmen.Nash@noaa.gov*.

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Upcoming Conferences & Events

MAY

3–7: Integrated Monitoring and Assessment for Effective Water Quality Management – EMAP Symposium 2004
Location: Newport, Rhode Island
www.csg.org, keyword "EMAP"

16–21: Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) 2004 Annual Conference
Location: Biloxi, Mississippi
www.floods.org

23–26: 19th International Conference of The Coastal Society
Location: Newport, Rhode Island
www.thecoastalsociety.org/conference.html

27–28: Center for Natural Resource Economics and Policy (CNREP) Conference on the Challenges of Socioeconomic Research in Coastal Systems: Valuation, Analysis, and Policy Development
Location: Baton Rouge, Louisiana
www.agecon.lsu.edu/CNREP/

JUNE

2–6: International Symposia on Society and Resource Management (ISSRM) 2004 Conference
Location: Keystone Resort, Colorado
www.cnr.colostate.edu/2004ISSRM/

For more information on upcoming events, please visit
www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/conferences.html

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